QUICK FACTS

COVID IS STILL HERE AND IT'S NOT MILD - In May of 2023 the US government declared the COVID State of Emergency over, but this does not mean that COVID is no longer a threat. In fact, COVID continues to evolve and is found in high levels all over the world. The pandemic is not only still here, but is becoming more dangerous with each new strain.

COVID INFECTION IS DANGEROUS FOR EVERYONE - Everyone is at risk of serious complications from an infection because COVID attacks every part of your body. COVID can also live in your cells and reactivate years later.[1] This means you can feel fine now and become very sick at any point in the future.

VACCINES CAN'T BE OUR ONLY FORM OF PROTECTION - COVID vaccinations reduce hospitalizations and serious illness when people first get COVID, but they have not ended the pandemic. The existing vaccines do not provide immunity from COVID - you can still catch it over and over again. When vaccinated people do get COVID, they can still develop Long COVID and other health conditions.[2] The best protection from COVID is prevention. Reducing the number of times you get COVID reduces your chances of serious complications or death.

MASKS ARE IMPORTANT FOR KEEPING US SAFE - High quality, well-fitting masks (N95, KN95, KF94) are very protective. These masks can provide a good seal around your face so that all of the air you breathe is filtered through the mask. Wearing a mask protects you, but also the people around you. One-way masking never perfectly protects people, so the more people who wear masks, the safer we all are![3]

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Airborne pandemic tips & tools:
https://cleanaircrew.org/

COVID wastewater dashboard:
https://www.pmc19.com/data/index.php

How to hold safer in-person gatherings:
https://peoplescdc.org/2022/11/17/safer-in-person-gatherings/

How to sample for COVID rapid tests for most accurate results:
https://www.ontariohealth.ca/sites/ontariohealth/files/2022-02/COVID-19RapidAntigenTests-HowtoCollectaSample.pdf

When to take COVID rapid tests for most accurate results:
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/testing.html#when-to-get-tested

WA state site to get Paxlovid:
https://doh.wa.gov/emergencies/covid-19/treatments/telehealth

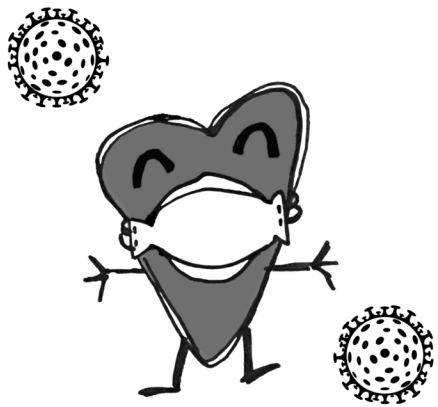
Citations & Resource Links

Mask Bloc Seattle Website

Website: https://linktr.ee/maskblocseattle
Email: maskblocseattle@gmail.com
IG: @maskblocseattle

MASK BLOC SEATTLE

COVID SAFETY GUIDE



Practical and effective tools for community health

HOW COVID IMPACTS THE BODY

COVID does not only affect your lungs. **It is an infection that can damage every part of your body**: the brain, the heart, the stomach, the nervous system, the immune system, and more.[4]

More than 200 symptoms have been linked to what is now being referred to as Long COVID, a condition that has no cure and no approved treatments.[5 6] Some forms of Long COVID do not significantly affect people's daily lives, but many people become unable to walk, eat normally, read, drive, socialize, or work any sort of job.[7]

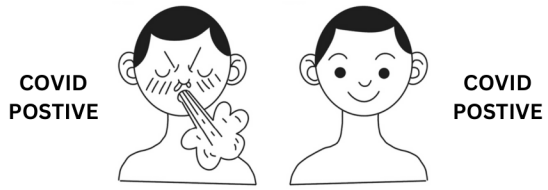
Every infection can lead to Long COVID, but your chances of contracting it multiply with each new infection. This means the more times you catch COVID, the more likely you are to be permanently sick.[8] As of 2023, over 20% of adults in Seattle reported having COVID symptoms for longer than three months.[9]

Even "mild" COVID infections can cause organ or brain damage.[10] Some people may not be aware they are sick. There are no nerve endings in our organs, brain, or blood vessels, which means damage from COVID can go unnoticed until people experience something like a stroke, heart attack, or aneurysm.

Getting COVID weakens your immune system and makes you more likely to get sick in the future. A weakened immune system leads to more frequent COVID infections in addition to other contagious illnesses like RSV, pneumonia, and influenza.[11]

COVID is currently the fourth leading cause of death among all adults and the fifth leading cause of death among children.[12 13]

HOW COVID IS SPREAD



COVID spreads through the air when an infected person breaths. Indoors it can spread though the space and stay suspended in the air for hours.[14] This means that if you are unmasked in an empty empty room, you can catch COVID from an infectious person who breathed in the room hours before.

Currently 40-60% of all COVID transmission is caused by people with no symptoms, who either haven't developed symptoms yet or who will never have symptoms.[15] **This means that many people spreading COVID do not feel sick and do not look sick.**

Asymptomatic/presymptomatic infections are still contagious. This is why using multiple layers of protection is so important. Wearing a mask prevents people who may be infectious without realizing it from spreading the disease to others. It also keeps people who are not infected from contracting the disease because we can't always know who is infectious just by looking!

It is possible to catch COVID outside, even when social distancing, although the risk is greater in indoor spaces, particularly if there is no or low ventilation.[16]

Layering your protection, using multiple methods to avoid infections, will always be the most effective approach. A well-fitting mask, improved ventilation, routine vaccination, and other means of mitigation will ensure everyone stays protected.

SAFETY TOOLS

It is important to use as many of these precautions as possible. If one method fails, the others can pick up the slack.

Masks
Well-fitting N95, KN95, KF94 masks help protect the wearer and the group. Aim for 100% people masking whenever possible.

Ventilation
Open as many windows as possible. Fans in windows and doorways can increase air circulation and bring in clean air from outside.

Filtration
Use portable HEPA or MERV13 (or better) filters to reduce indoor airborne virus particles. The more air filters the better!

Go Outside/Hybrid
Host events outside whenever possible, but be aware that outdoor COVID transmission is not uncommon. Offer hybrid options for events (i.e. video calls).

Vaccinations
Stay up to date on your COVID vaccinations to reduce your risk of initial severe illness and Long COVID.

Tests
Test for COVID at home and/or at an event before entry. Rapid Antigen *and* PCR tests can both return negative results for a person with a contagious COVID infection.[17 18]